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## UNCLE SAM, Ammunition Maker

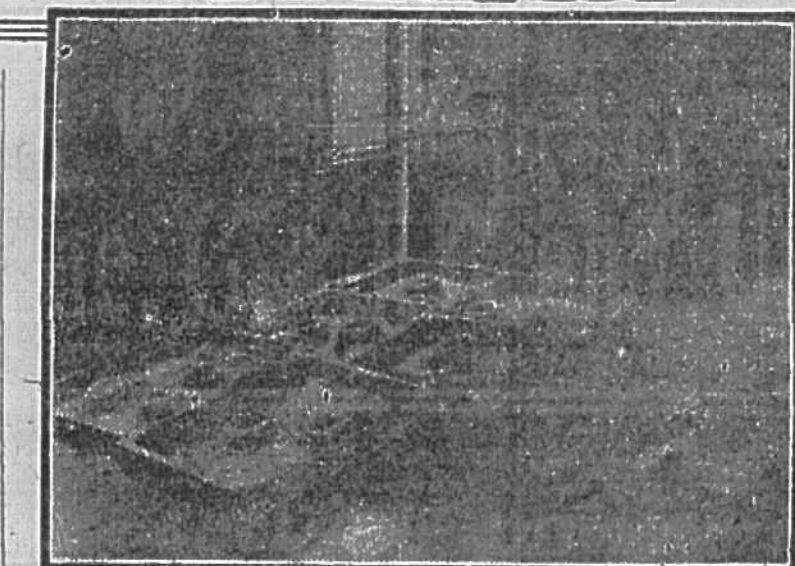
Our Military and Naval Establishments Have Their Own Powder Plants—Making Shot and Shell—Testing Gun Charges Under Exact Conditions.

BY WALDON FAWCETT.

It may or may not be true, as the old adage argues that money makes the mare go, but there is no question that it is ammunition that puts "pep" in preparedness. It is the supreme essential. A nation with plenty of powder might make bombs of tomato cans and do deadly execution, but a nation with guns and no shot and shell—perish the thought. As the people of the United States have been brought face to face with the issue of "preparedness" it has gradually dawned upon many persons who never thought of it that way before, that in the event of war it would be vastly more important for Uncle Sam to have an ample reserve supply of ammunition in his magazines than a bulk of gold coin in his strong boxes. Uncle Sam's credit might be good if he hadn't the coin to pay cash for his purchases, but it requires time to manufacture ammunition.

Uncle Sam in the Munitions Business. Aside from the paramount consideration of laying by some extra ammunition for a noisy day the most interesting feature of the present situation is that which discloses Uncle Sam looming up in the role of ammunition maker. Incidentally, this angle has direct bearing on the most hotly contested point in the dispute over preparedness. The citizens of the republic who don't believe in laying out vast sums in preparation for war will tell you, the minute conversation on the subject starts, that this whole preparedness agitation has been engineered by the American firms that manufacture munitions.

Now the interesting question is as to what these ready debaters will say when it comes about that Uncle Sam is in a position to manufacture all his own "handle with care" supplies. Within a few months now the U. S. Navy Department will have completed extensions of its great plant at Indian Head, Maryland, on the Potomac river that will place it in a position to manufacture all the powder needed for



Manufacturing Small Arms Powder

our warships. The Government has a lusty "infant industry" in torpedo manufacture; new projectile factories are proposed if Congress will loosen the purse strings.

### A Big Saving in Cost.

Thrift is an influence that is pushing the Government into the field of ammunition making. Here is a grain of comfort for the taxpayer who does not believe that the way to preserve peace is to be prepared for war. At any rate he can have the consolation of knowing that just in so far as Uncle Sam makes his own war material will money be saved to the public that pays, over any plan of purchasing in the open market. In proof of the economy of Government ammunition making, take the case of powder.

Just before the outbreak of the Spanish-American war the Government was paying the fancy price of \$1 per pound for all its smokeless powder and during and after our brush with Spain we paid \$9 to \$5 cents a pound to the private companies from which the supply was obtained. In the face of continual protests, approaching a public scandal, the price gradually went down to 69 cents. Then Congress made a thorough investigation and as a result fixed 53 cents per pound as all the Government would pay. This past year Uncle Sam has been making smokeless powder at Indian Head—not a sparse quantity, but a total of nearly 4,000,000 pounds—at a cost of less than 25 cents per pound.

As a matter of fact the brief history of the Indian Head ammunition plant is the one big object lesson that is encouraging Uncle Sam to take up the manufacture of all sorts of war munitions. It was only in 1900 that the Government began to make powder at the establishment on the lower Potomac and then operations were in-

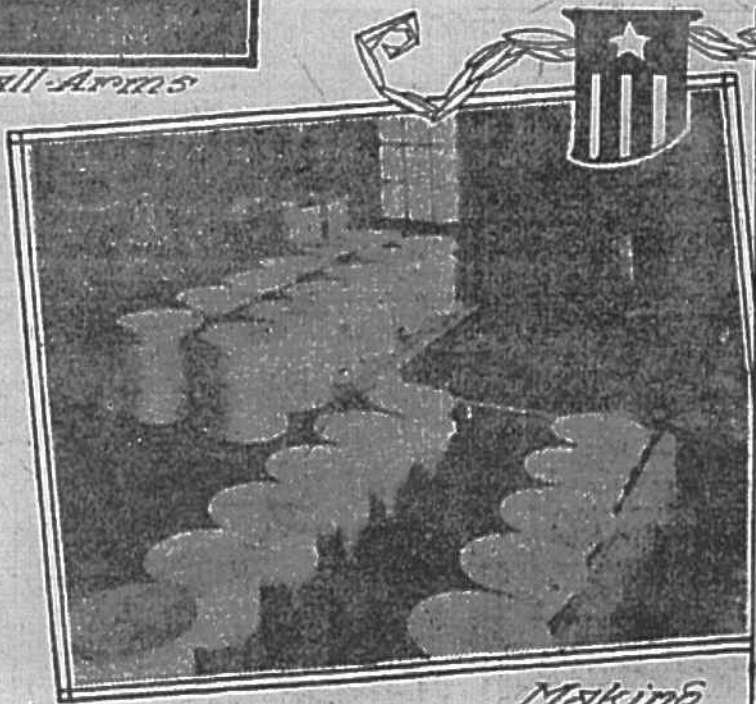
augurated on a comparatively modest scale. Yet, at present, this modern manufactory, thanks to appropriations by the last Congress, is in a position to meet the powder calls of the Navy and may still further be "speeded up" if it is decided to spend as proposed this year the sum of \$8,000,000 for reserve munitions. But for all this achievement, Thomas A. Edison, the famous inventor, and an earnest advocate of peace, said, after a recent visit to Indian Head that he would favor doubling the capacity of the big Federal powder mill.

### No Longer a Novice.

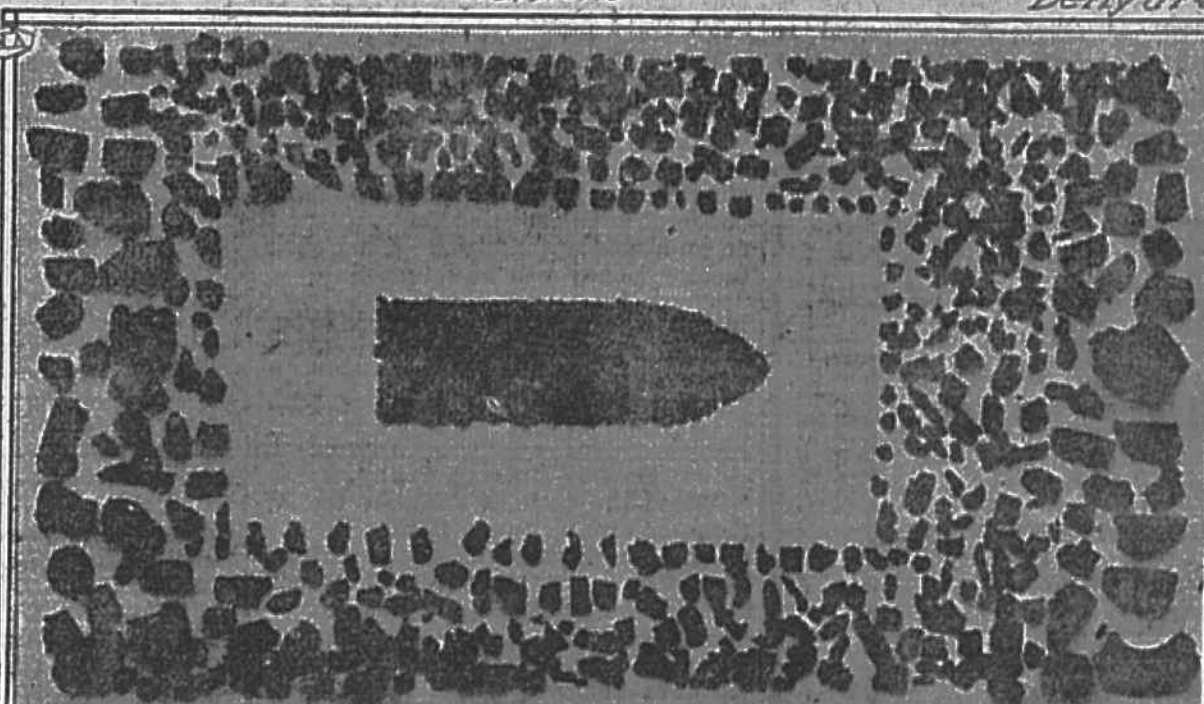
Ever hear of an acid test? Well, here goes for a story of one that proves that Uncle Sam is not yet entitled to rank as a veteran in ammunition manufacture is no longer in the apprentice class. Mixed acid is one of the essentials in the manufacture of smokeless powder. Uncle Sam has been buying his acid in the open market. Lately the purveyors



Testing U.S. Government Made Ammunition Under Service Conditions



Making Gun Cotton



A 3 Inch Steel Shell of U.S. Manufacture Blown Into 2378 Pieces

of acid have boosted the price—account of the war, you know, same as tea and tires—from three cents per pound to nearly seven cents per pound. Whereupon our Federal powder-makers have gotten busy with the result that they have discovered that they can manufacture their own acid at a cost of 3 cents per pound or less and can, in one year, save the Government more than one-third of a million dollars or enough to install the acid-making plant.

A parallel case is found in torpedo manufacture, but how the Government is making its own torpedoes at the rate of more than four hundred a year would make a whole story in itself. The manufacture of mines, too, mines of both the anchored and tactical types, is an interesting "side line" in the Federal munitions industry. But when

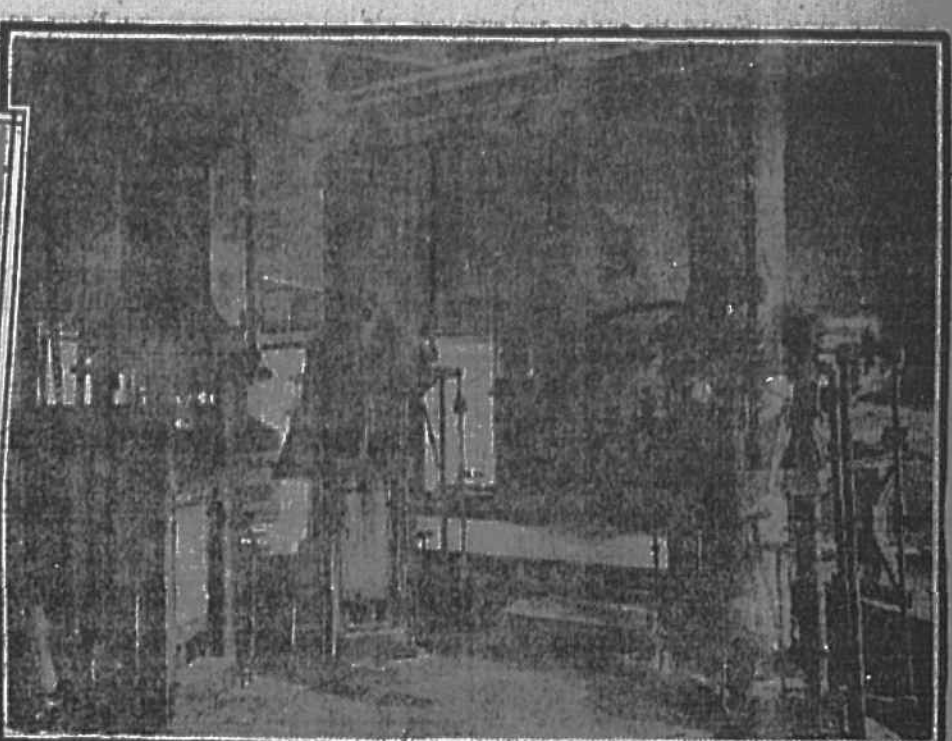
we bear in mind that a \$15,000,000 dreadnaught becomes a mere worthless, floating hulk the minute her ammunition is exhausted it is any wonder that the powers that be at Washington are most concerned about the "main chance" in munitions. That is why the loud cry to Congress is for a bigger "reserve" of large shells and other munitions that require months to manufacture.

The Army, alike to the Navy, has some busy little experimenters who are always going after "something new" in the ammunition line and the best of these inventive sharks have not been lured by the offers of fancy salaries made by the managers of private munition plants. Recently—to illustrate the tireless effort—the military experts at the Frankford Arsenal have conducted experiments and

developed a method of manufacturing cartridge cases of steel that would prove most valuable in an emergency. Another novelty lately produced is a small-arms "ammunition pack."

### Making Munitions For Our Army.

Not to have all the eggs in one basket is considered in many respects an advantage and this is the policy that Uncle Sam follows in providing army ammunition. The responsibility for providing projectiles is apportioned among a number of Government arsenals located in different sections of the country, whereas at the Planting Arsenal is located the Army powder factory and high explosive factory. Not to burden the reader with too many figures it may be noted that at the above-mentioned plant the Government last year expended one and



Dehydrating Process

three-quarter million dollars in making more than a million pounds of cannon powder and 75,000 pounds of high explosive.

The pride of our war officials just now is the new plant at the Watertown Arsenal for the manufacture of armor-piercing projectiles for sea-coast guns and mortars. Here the chief output is 12-inch deck-placing projectiles—this last an important class of munitions that must be used up at a rapid rate in time of peace if the men behind the guns are to make good in time of war. A nifty little specialty that is being produced at Watertown is the "night tracer," which can be attached to the shrapnel ammunition for 3-inch field guns and which in action serves to indicate to the gunners what they are doing when firing at night.

### Hand Grenades and Aeroplane Guns.

Newsreader readers who have been thrilled with accounts of all the new-fangled forms of ammunition that have been introduced this past couple of years in the Old World need not worry but what Uncle Sam is right up-to-date in turning out the latest fashions in munitions from his own plants. At Frankford Arsenal, for example, much work has been done this past twelve months in the production of hand grenades, light bombs (for illumination in the event of night attacks), etc. And while Yankee ingenuity has been exercised to devise special types of guns for shooting down hostile aircraft, our busy little ammunition makers have been storing up for future use "the best ever" bombs to be dropped from aeroplanes flying the Stars and Stripes. Nor is it any secret that at Frankford singular success has been attained with bombs manufactured from shrapnel cases.